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S E C R E T TEGUCIGALPA 002438

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STATE FOR WHA, WHA/PPC, WHA/USOAS, AND WHA/CEN
NSC FOR DAN FISK

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/02/2015

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SUBJECT: HONDURAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION DAY 6 - CIRCLING
THE TARMAC, RUNNING OUT OF METAPHORS; STILL NO CONCESSION

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 2432 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Chief of the Political Section Derrick M. Olsen;
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) National Party candidate Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo called Ambassador the late afternoon of December 2 to inform the Ambassador that he will not concede today, and explain that he did not concede December 1 at the request of his party who allege widespread irregularities in the electoral table vote counts. At the National Party's request, the DCM and PolChief met with National Party VP candidate Mario Canahuati, congressional candidate and key party official David Matamoros, and National Party official Africo Madrid the same afternoon for an hour at the Embassy to discuss the National Party's concern over alleged fraud at numerous electoral tables and the relatively high percentage (6) of null votes. The National Party leaders claimed there was a scheme by the Liberal Party to in effect stuff numerous ballot boxes with extra ballots brought by individual voters to affect each electoral table at the margins. The National Party is also briefing the OAS on the alleged fraud.

¶2. (SBU) PolOffs discussed the alleged problem later that evening with Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) Magistrate Saul Escobar and technical staff, who assured PolOffs that (a) the TSE checked for numerous irregularities in vote counts,

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including the number of ballots in the closing vote counts not being more than the number of ballots issued to that electoral table, and (b) they would work to brief the parties better on this fraud prevention work and that the parties could raise any alleged fraud concerns at the TSE consultative commission (as the National Party said it had done on this issue). Despite these reassuring answers, these same National Party officials went on TV the night of December 2 to charge fraud.

¶3. (C) PolChief asked Liberal Party member Hugo Noe Pino the afternoon of December 2 if Liberal Party presidential candidate Manuel "Mel" Zelaya would like to have a public but non-congratulatory meeting with Ambassador or wait to have a public congratulatory meeting with the Ambassador after a Lobo concession. Zelaya told the Ambassador in an early evening phone call December 2 that he wanted to wait until Lobo officially conceded before having a public meeting with the Ambassador, and that early next week would be fine. Zelaya and his team do not appear to be worried about the National Party fraud charges, and have proceeded to discuss with the press plans for their future administration.

¶4. (SBU) Chief of the Organization of American States' Electoral Observation Mission Moises Benamor left the country the afternoon of December 2; four technical staffers remain for OAS representation.

¶5. (SBU) As of 7:12pm local time, the TSE had approximately 89 percent of the electoral tables counted, little progress from the 88.06 percent from this morning. Zelaya continues to lead Lobo 49.90 percent (915,075 votes) to 46.16 percent (846,493 votes), a 3.74 percent lead. These numbers included at 4:00pm at least 88.5 percent of the Cortes Department, including San Pedro Sula, (where Zelaya is beating Lobo by 8.69 percent), and 85.2 percent of Francisco Morazan Department, including Tegucigalpa, (where Lobo has a 4.62 percent lead over Zelaya), and 87.0 percent of the Yoro Department (where Zelaya is beating Lobo by 11.21 percent). The website (when working) lags in updated information but when working has reliable results: <http://resultados.tse.hn>.

¶6. (C) Comment: Post is concerned that the National Party may challenge the entire results of the general elections based on irregularities. Post notes that in the National Party meeting every suspect vote count shown to Emboffs appeared to be signed by the National Party electoral table representative, meaning all those representatives were either in cahoots with or oblivious to any alleged fraud, both rather unlikely. The TSE posted results still show Zelaya as the likely winner barring either a change due significant reversals of electoral tables or a highly improbable turnaround in the remaining 10 percent of votes. Post is

unsure when this never-ending race will stop. End Comment.
Ford